

IPIB Monthly Column

October 4, 2021

QUESTION: Does a request for a record have to be made in person? Must it be in writing?

ANSWER: The custodian cannot require the physical presence of the person requesting the public record. Iowa Code section 22.3(1) requires record custodians to respond to requests made in writing, by telephone, or by electronic means. A verbal record request is sufficient, as long as you can identify the record sought. A written request is helpful in a complex or lengthy request.

Some government bodies have implemented programs to manage record requests, such as submitting requests through an online portal. While a record custodian may ask a requestor to use their program, they can not require that their preferred method be used.

Regardless of whatever method is preferred, a government body may not condition a record release on whether the requestor used the record custodian's preferred method. Record requestors should provide a clear and accurate description of what they want.

Did You Know that the Iowa Public Information Board staff is available to assist you with questions or problems involving open meetings and public records in Iowa? During the month of September 2021, 62 contacts were made with the Iowa Public Information Board office.

TYPE	September 2021
Formal complaints	12
Advisory opinions	0
Declaratory orders	0
Informal complaints	5
Informal requests	37
Miscellaneous	8
TOTAL:	62

Who can contact the IPIB and how long does it take? Any person can contact the IPIB for assistance by telephone (515-725-1781), by email, or on the IPIB website. So far in 2021, 556 identifiable people have contacted the IPIB.

Board Members

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Of these, 293 were private citizens, 197 were government officials or employees, and 66 were members of the media. In 2021, 70% of the incoming contacts were resolved the first day, 12% were resolved in one to five days, and 18% were resolved in six or more days. Opinions, rulings, FAQs, reports, and training documents are available on the IPIB website – www.ipib.iowa.gov.